

MUSEUM NEWS

# *Greek Vases*

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART

SPRING 1968





*Swan vase.* East Greek. ca. 650-25 B.C.  
Ht. 4 3/8 inches. 64.54.

## GREEK VASES IN TOLEDO

This booklet presents a selection of the most important Greek vases in the collection of the Museum.

While the first acquisition by this Museum of a Greek vase took place as early as 1912, it was in 1916 that George W. Stevens, the Museum's first director, made a major purchase in this field when he acquired at public auction a group of 50 vases from the famed Cesnola Collection.

The majority of the vases here illustrated, however, and probably the most significant examples in the collection, have been acquired since the 1950s with funds bequeathed by the Museum's founder, Edward Drummond Libbey.

The vases illustrated here are arranged in order of their historical development.

*Otto Wittmann, Director*

## *Museum News*

THE TOLEDO MUSEUM OF ART  
TOLEDO, OHIO

**SPRING 1968**      *New Series: Volume 11, Number 2*

EDITOR: Otto Wittmann

ASSISTANT EDITOR: James Key Reeve

COVER: *Hydria.* The A.D. Painter. Attic black-figure. ca. 520 B.C. (Detail of main panel.) Ht. 23 3/8 inches.



*Fragment from a column krater with Swan.*  
Attic black-figure. ca. 560 B.C. 4 1/4 x 3 1/8  
inches. Gift of Carl Spitzer. 32.33.



## GREEK VASES

### INTRODUCTION.

Ever since the Renaissance, the art of ancient Greece and Rome has been admired in Europe and later, in America. Princes and Popes of Italy have had their collections of classical statues since the sixteenth century.

While ancient art set examples for Renaissance and Baroque artists, the serious study of ancient monuments and styles started only in the eighteenth century when the German, Winckelmann, began to sort out Greek and Roman sculpture, architecture, and ceramics. The publication of Stuart and Revett's *Antiquities of Athens* in 1762 proved a further stimulus while the energetic activities of Gavin Hamilton, painter, excavator, and art dealer, helped to populate with gods of marble the galleries of the country houses of the English gentry. Another Hamilton, Sir William, who was British envoy to Naples, formed two large collections of Greek vases, the first of which he sold to the British Museum in 1767. The figured friezes of Robert Adam and John Flaxman owe their forms to the growing study of classical art and Josiah Wedgwood sought to emulate his classical prototypes not only in his wares, but also in naming his factory Etruria after the region of Italy where many Greek vases have been found.

Neo-Classicism went hand in hand with the Romantic movement, giving shape to the art and politics of the Frenchman, Jacques-Louis David, inspiring Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn," and imparting life to the cold marble of the famous Greek Slave by the American, Hiram Powers. But it was the archaeologists, scholars, and collectors who provided the learned, discriminating foundation for artists and public in pursuit of ancient beauty. British, German, and French scholars classified and identified types of Greek vases, revising their views with each new discovery unearthed by the spade from ancient tombs and temples, while collectors, especially the British, created an ever increasing demand for the ceramics of Greece and Italy. The nineteenth century also saw the growth of great public collections of art, resulting in distinguished groups of Greek vases in London, Paris, Berlin, Munich, and Rome. The turn of the century brought to New York and Boston the start of collections rivalling those of Europe.

It is only since the 1950s that Toledo has deliberately collected Greek vases with a view to presenting its public with a select series of this basic aspect of ceramic art. Although we cannot hope to equal the great col-

lections of Europe and the American East Coast in size, we have tried to find individual examples of the highest quality obtainable.

To go back to ancient history, it is noteworthy that Greek ceramics were much prized in the Mediterranean world in antiquity. Greek vases have been found in Sicily, Spain, and the Near East and, to judge from tomb excavations in Italy, the Etruscans must have had a liking akin to obsession for the wares of Corinth and Athens. Implicit in this wide appeal is an equal breadth of formative influences which, selected and synthesized by a sense of order and proportion typically Greek, produced the shapes and decoration of ceramics that have become synonymous with the Greek spirit and way of life. Fortunately, many Greek vases have survived for our enjoyment and study. (The only larger class left today is coins.) We therefore can observe a long line of change from the earliest wares of Crete and Cyprus to the final overelaborate decadence that mirrored the end of the Greek world and the rise of the Roman.

Other factors, economic, technical, and social, hastened the decline. The increasing concentration of wealth in the hands of a few who preferred rare glass and precious metals reduced the output of fine vases and increased the production of common wares, while the rise of painting as an independent art drew the talent away that had formerly lavished its skill on clay. The desire for the imposing rather than the intimate artistic statement, coupled with a change of taste in subject matter from the heroic to the frivolous, left the potter and his painter without a market and without the solid base of tradition essential to the artist-craftsman. In short, as the ideal of free, responsible citizenship embodied in the Greek city-state declined under the impetus of Alexander the Great, the first Greek "emperor", and was finally crushed by the weight of Roman Imperial domination, so expired the inspiration for visual communication preserved today in thousands of Greek vases. It is not only the quantity of Greek vases surviving that makes them so eminently collectible, but also the sense of cultivated order expressed in humble clay with a sophisticated standard of quality. With a simple, essentially primitive technology, the Greek artisans of the seventh to fifth centuries B.C. created large numbers of fine vases and remarkably few poor ones. It is these qualities which make Greek vases the epitome of Greek civilization for the student of history and the connoisseur of beauty.

*Bowl.* Cypriote bronze age.  
1400-1200 B.C. Brown leather  
stitch pattern on white slip. Diam.  
5 3/4 inches. Museum purchase.  
16.123.







*Storage jar. Mycenaean 14th century B.C.*  
Stylized red marine motifs on buff.  
Ht. 15 15/16 inches. 65.173.



*Amphora. Cypriote geometric. 9th century B.C.* Brown on buff.  
Ht. 15 inches. Museum purchase.  
16.79.



*Amphora. Mycenaean. 12th century B.C.* Red on buff. Ht. 15 inches. 63.17.



*Amphora. Attic geometric. 8th century B.C.*  
Ht. 23 inches. 26.43.

*Lidded krater. Boeotian geometric*  
ca. 700 B.C.  
Brown on buff.  
Ht. 13 15/16 inches.  
67.132.



*Siren vase. Corinthian.*  
Early 6th century B.C.  
Ht. 3 9/16 inches.  
67.133.







*Olpe.* Corinthian. Painter of Vatican 73.  
Incised, red and black on buff. 650-625 B.C.  
Ht. 12 3/4 inches. 63.22.



*Lidded pyxis.* Corinthian. Late 7th century  
B.C. Ht. 7 7/8 inches. 63.24.



*Amphora.* Laconian. Incised, black and red  
animal friezes on white-slip. ca. 560 B.C.  
Ht. 10 13/16 inches. 64.53.



*Covered oinochoe.* Painter of Vatican 73.  
Corinthian. 650-625 B.C. Ht. 9 5/8 inches.  
63.23.



*Alabastron.* Corinthian. Incised, red and black  
sphinx on buff. Late 7th century B.C.  
Ht. 6 1/2 inches. Museum Purchase. 17.132.



*Hydria.* The Antimenes Painter. Attic black-figure. ca. 525 B.C. Main panel: Apollo with group of gods (Hermes, Leto, Apollo, Artemis, Poseidon)  
Shoulder: Herakles wrestling the Nemean lion.  
Predella: Lions and boars. Ht. 19 3/4 inches.  
Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 56.70.



*Kylix.* Tleson potter. Attic black-figure. ca. 550 B.C. inscribed "Tleson son of Nearchos made me."  
Interior tondo: Theseus and the Minotaur.  
Diam. 9 1/2 inches. 58.70.



*Olpe.* Attic black-figure. ca. 530 B.C.  
Panel: Four-horse chariot. Ht. 8 3/4 inches.  
61.22.







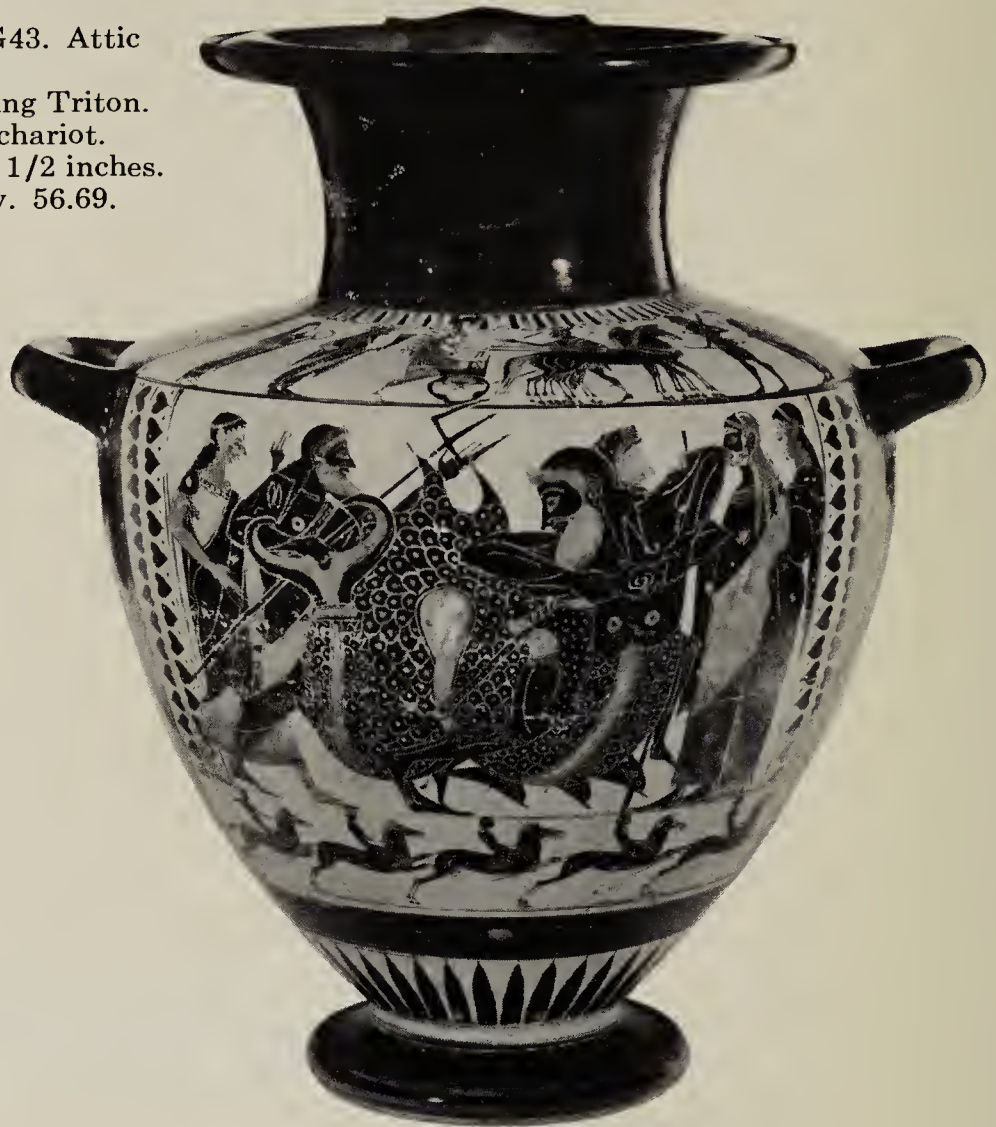
*Kylix*. Perhaps by Nikosthenes potter  
Attic black-figure.  
ca. 520 B.C.  
Busts of Athena and Warrior between eyes.  
Cocks under handles.  
Diam. 8 5/8 inches  
67.135



*Kalathos* (tumbler). Attic black-figure.  
ca. 540 B.C.  
Ht. 4 1/4 inches.  
67.134.



*Hydria*. Painter of Vatican G43. Attic black-figure. ca. 540-30 B.C.  
Main Panel: Herakles wrestling Triton.  
Shoulder: Athena mounting chariot.  
Predella: Horse race. Ht. 17 1/2 inches.  
Gift of Florence Scott Libbey. 56.69.



*Kyathos*. (wine ladle.) Attic black-figure.  
ca. 490 B.C. Total ht. 6 1/4 inches. 66.110.

*Kylix*. Attic black-figure. ca. 540-30 B.C.  
Diam. 7 1/8 inches. 27.97.







*Calyx krater.* The Rycroft Painter. Attic black-figure. ca. 520-10 B.C.  
 A: Athena with Achilles and Ajax playing draughts.  
 B: Musician, athletes and referees. Ht. 15 3/4 inches. 63.26.





*Hydria*. Attic black-figure.  
Main panel: Four-horse chariot with armed warriors.  
Shoulder: Herakles leading Cerberus.  
Predella: Lions and boars.  
Ht. 18 inches. Museum purchase. 50.261.



*Foot of kylix*. Attic black-figure. ca. 520 B.C.  
Fantastic animals: lions, panthers, winged griffons. Diam. 7 3/8 inches. 63.25.



*Lekythos*. Attic black-figure on white ground.  
Early 5th century B.C.  
Polyxena and Achilles.  
Ht. 11 inches. 47.62.





*Amphora.* The Acheloos Painter. Attic black-figure. Separate stand. ca. 510 B.C. Main panel: Athena with Herakles and the Ceryneian hind. Stand: Men fanning fire. Total ht. 26 1/4 inches. 58.69.



*Amphora.* The Acheloos Painter. Attic black-figure. Late 6th century B.C. A. Europa on bull. B. Herakles fighting centaur. Ht. 13 1/16 inches. 52.65.







*Panathenaic amphora. The Kleophrades Painter. Attic black-figure. ca. 490 B.C.*  
 A. Athena flanked by cocks on columns.  
 Inscribed: "One of the prizes from (the games) at Athens."  
 B. Referee between Pankration contestants.  
 Ht. 24 15/16 inches. 61.24.







*Kylix.* The Bowdoin Painter. Attic black-figure to red-figure. ca. 520 B.C.  
Exterior: red-figure eyes and youth.  
Interior tondo: black-figure centaur.  
Diam.  $8 \frac{13}{16}$  inches. 63.28.



*Skyphos.* The Theseus Painter. Black-figure.  
ca. 490 B.C.  
Panel: Theseus fighting with Procrustes.  
Ht.  $6 \frac{11}{16}$  inches. 63.27.





*Kylix.* Euergides potter. Attic red-figure.  
ca. 515 B.C.  
Exterior: Herakles slaying Kyknos; Fighting  
Hoplites.  
Inscribed: "Euergides made me."  
Interior tondo: cock.  
Diam. 11 11/16 inches. 61.25.







*Kylix. The Foundry Painter. Attic red-figure.  
ca. 490-80 B.C.  
Exterior: Procession of revelers.  
Interior tondo: two drunken revelers.  
Diam. 11 1/2 inches. 64.126.*







*Stamnos*. The Syleus Painter.  
Attic red-figure.  
Early 5th century B.C.  
A. Nike between Amphitrite  
and Poseidon.  
B. Athletes and trainer.  
Ht. 14 1/8 inches.  
56.58.







*Bell krater.* Attic red-figure.  
ca. 440-430 B.C.  
A: Helen and Meneloas  
B: Departure of Youth  
Diam. 14 3/4 inches  
67.154







*Kylix*. The Triptolemos Painter. Attic red-figure. ca. 490 B.C.  
 A. Boxers and trainers.  
 B. Javelin throwers.  
 Interior: Boxer and trainer.  
 Diam. 12 3/4 inches. 61.26.





*Lidded pyxis.* Painter of London D12.  
White-ground. ca. 460 B.C.  
Domestic scene of women with basket of wool  
fillets and balls of wool.  
Ht. 4 3/4 inches. 63.29.







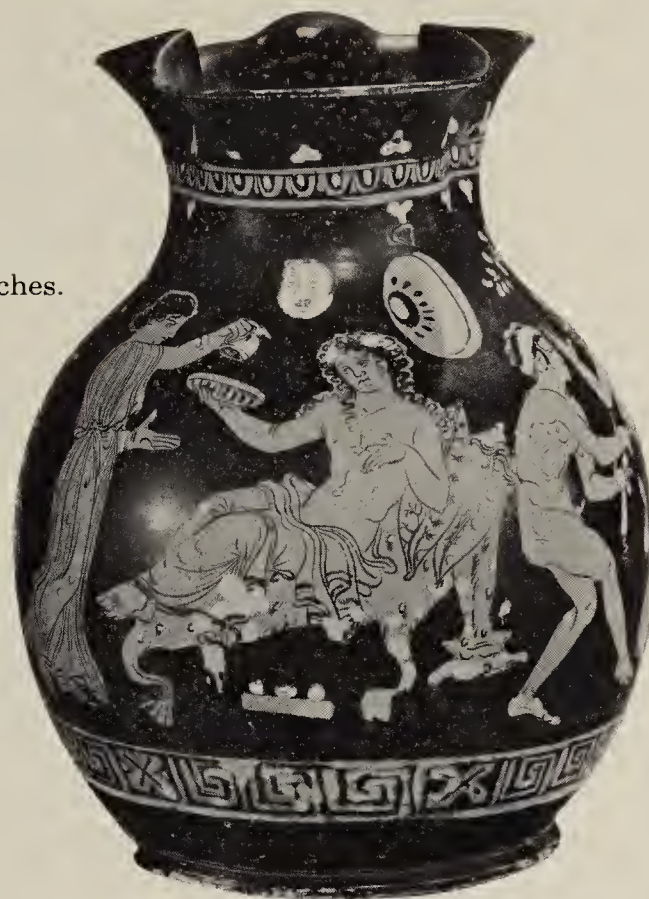
*Squat Lekythos.* Attic red-figure. Second half 5th century B.C. Domestic Scene. Ht. 6 1/2 inches. Museum purchase. 17.131.



*Squat Lekythos.* Manner of the Meidias Painter. Attic red-figure. Late 5th century B.C. Man and woman with winged eras. Ht. 5 1/8 inches. Museum purchase. 17.135.



*Oinochoe. The Felton Painter. Apulian red-figure. ca. 375-350 B.C.  
Dionysos and companions. Ht. 8 1/2 inches.  
67.136.*



*Knob-handled dish. Apulian red-figure.  
ca. 330 B.C. Eros. Diam. 15 3/4 inches.  
67.137.*



## DATING AND STYLES.

The dating of ancient ceramics is beset with difficulties. Few ancient writers conceived of history in the modern sense and relatively few pieces are known to have come from precisely dated sites. But an occasional known date, such as a war, or a coin found with a pot in a recorded excavation have enabled us to establish the broad outlines of a date sequence. The rest is filling in between the known and while for some types we can be confident within a decade, for others, a century is still a small margin for error. The following outline will give a thumbnail description of the chief styles with their approximate dates, all of which are before Christ.

*Mycenaean* (including Sub-Mycenaean) (1600-1025): The Aegaeon successors to the Mediterranean civilization of King Minos of Crete, the Mycenaeans created a less exuberant, more rational version of Minoan style. They used full blown forms on tapering narrow feet, decorated with octopi, squids, and rays confined in horizontal bands brushed in earthy red color on an often warm buff clay to produce wares of massive elegance.

*Protogeometric* (ca. 1025-900): An "international" style, Protogeometric wares have been found in Greece and the islands of the eastern Mediterranean. The sea-creatures of Mycenaean pots disappeared to be replaced by abstract designs, precise concentric circles with horizontal bands or hatched lines and squares, but the colors remained similar with the occasional addition of a purplish red. On Cyprus, Protogeometric style persisted later than elsewhere. The Protogeometric and subsequent Geometric styles seem to parallel the gradual emergence of the Greek city-state after the so-called "invasion" of the Northern Greek Dorians.

*Geometric* (ca. 900-700): Athens, by this time, had asserted her leadership in Greek ceramics and other city-states showed their dependence on her wares. Living creatures again appeared on vases (often of very large but elegant proportions) in friezes of stylized birds, horses, and people.

*Corinthian* (ca. 759-550): Corinthian was the most prominent of several orientaling styles, so-called because of their relation to the art of the ancient Near East. The Corinthians handled their pale buff clay with great exactness and decorated it with rows of lions, panthers, ducks, and fantastic creatures done in black, purplish red, and white, frequently separated by bands of conventionalized scale ornament. Contours and details were incised through the color to the underlying buff clay body to achieve a sharpness not previously seen in Greek wares.

*Attic Black-Figure* (ca. 600-480): In this period, Athenian craftsmen, taking over techniques developed by the Corinthians, developed the standard against which other Greek Archaic wares are measured. The warm orange-red clay of Attica provided a splendidly contrasting background for the black figures harmoniously composed on meticulously potted vessels. While the animals of the Corinthians were refined and given individual emphasis, it was the human figure (continuing trends started in the Geometric style) that became the center of interest. Implicit in this emphasis was the consciousness of Greek civilization and its roots. The Greek gods, especially Athena, Apollo, and Dionysos; Homeric legends of Achilles and Odysseus; and the Greek heroes Herakles and Theseus were subjects frequently depicted on Attic black-figure vases.

*Attic Red-Figure* (ca. 530-400): Basically a reversal of black-figure, red-figure involved profound changes of attitude as well. The subject stood out against a black surrounding field. Contour and details were formed by black lines applied with a brush, instead of the incised lines of black-figure. (In technique and effect black-figure is roughly comparable to engraving and red-figure to etching.) This innovation produced a freedom of drawing that well suited a change in subject matter from the heroic subjects of the Archaic Period. As time progressed, youthful athletes, scenes of domestic life, and attractive ladies tended to predominate. The final phase of this Classical style ended by destroying itself in

overcrowded compositions of frivolous content, often with disastrous attempts at an illusionistic sort of perspective.

*Imitative styles.* Many Greek wares were widely admired and gave rise to provincial imitations. As has been mentioned, Attic Protogeometric and Geometric set the style elsewhere in Greece and Cyprus. Corinthian wares inspired the neighboring Spartan potters of Laconia, and the Corinthians in turn copied Attic black-figure.

The Greek colonies in south Italy, besides importing enormous numbers of vases from "back home" produced some respectable versions of black-figure and red-figure, but shared in the general collapse of vase painting at the end of the fourth century.

## TECHNIQUES AND SHAPES.

Greek vases, like most ancient ceramics, were earthenware — that is a porous clay fired at a relatively low temperature. In this respect they are similar to the common flower pot. They were decorated, not with a vitreous glaze, but with a slip or finely divided particles of clay in water of a consistency suitable for brushing. Often the slip was simply a finer grade of the same clay from which the vase itself was made. Differences in color in red and black figure were achieved by controlling the amount of oxygen in the kiln during firing.

After throwing the vase on his potter's wheel, the Greek ceramist would allow it to dry until leather hard and then, turning it still more, carefully trimmed the vessel to precisely the desired contour, imparting the elegance of profile so typical of Greek wares.

A brief description of the shapes of the Greek vases illustrated in these pages follows.

*Alabastron* — a small, narrow, footless flask for unguents, so called after the stone, alabaster, from which early examples were made.

*Amphora* — a tall two-handled vessel for the storage of oil and wine. A special type was used as prizes at the Panathenaic games, the tradition for which persists in altered form in modern trophy cups.

*Hydria* — as the name implies, a large three-handled jar for water.

*Krater* — a large open-mouthed vessel for mixing water and wine.

*Kyathos* — a ladle used in conjunction with a krater.

*Kylix* — a broad, shallow footed cup with or without a stem, with two horizontal handles used for drinking wine. The capacity of the usual kylix is not so alarming when one considers that the ancient Greeks mixed their rather heavy wine with about two parts of water.

*Lekythos* — a small mouthed, footed flask for oil or unguents with a single handle at the neck. It occurs in slender and squat types. The lekythoi with white, rather than red or black grounds, were intended for funerary use.

*Oinochoe* — a single-handled jug made in a wide variety of shapes, some lidded, for pouring wine or other liquids. Some are tall and slender and others low and globular.

*Olpe* — a tall, pear-shaped oinochoe.

*Pyxis* — a lidded container, often cylindrical, for cosmetics or toilet articles.

*Skyphos* (also called *Kotyle*) — a flaring drinking cup, usually with two horizontal handles.

*Stamnos* — a short-necked amphora with horizontal handles common in Attic red-figure.

*Rudolf M. Riefstahl*



## SUGGESTED READING.

For those who wish to expand their knowledge and appreciation of Greek ceramics, the following books are recommended and may be consulted in the Museum Art Reference Library:

Paolo Enrico Arias and Max Hirmer, *A History of a Thousand Years of Greek Vase Painting*, New York, 1961.

R. M. Cook, *Greek Painted Pottery*, London and Chicago, 1960.

Arthur Lane, *Greek Pottery*, London and New York, 1947.

Joseph V. Noble, *The Techniques of Painted Attic Pottery*, New York, 1965.

Gisela M. A. Richter and Marjorie J. Milne, *Shapes and Names of Athenian Vases*, New York, 1935.



*Hydria. The A.D. Painter*  
Attic black-figure.  
ca. 520 B.C. Main scene:  
Women at fountain. Shoulder:  
Departure of Priam.  
Ht. 23 3/8 inches. 61.23.

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